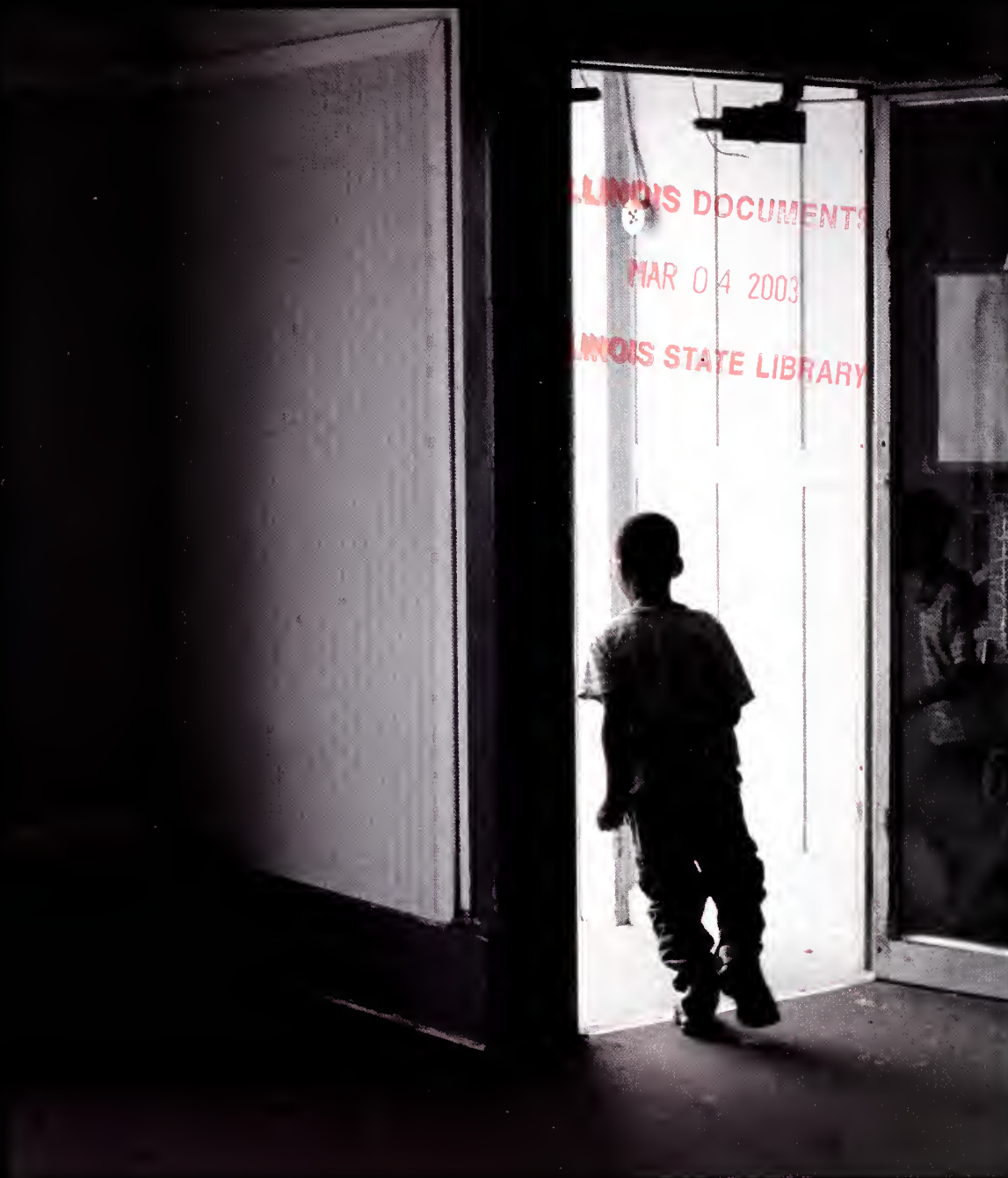


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# Illinois Issues

*A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield*



## Out of hiding

Poverty is on the rise in Illinois and increasingly visible. It can no longer be overlooked

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*Peggy Boyer Long*



## It's time to debate women's crime and punishment policies

by Peggy Boyer Long

**S**ally Jefferson arrived at Alton Penitentiary on September 11, 1835. A prison clerk's brief notation in the Convict Register marked the occasion. "No. 23," the clerk wrote, had been sentenced by the Peoria County Circuit Court to 12 months of confinement for arson, including two weeks in solitary. She was 24 years old. "Her left hand and arm had been considerably seared by a burn when young."

Historian L. Mara Dodge discovered this fleeting reference to Sally Jefferson in the Illinois State Historical Library while researching Illinois' female prison population. In her book, *"Whores and Thieves of the Worst Kind": A Study of Women, Crime, and Prisons, 1835-2000*, she writes that no court files on Sally Jefferson's case survived, and no news reports about her crime. There's no record of the circumstances surrounding her act, her motivations or her social standing. Arson was an unusual crime for a woman, Dodge notes, yet the sentence was severe. Does the seared arm suggest a history of setting fires? There is no way to know.

But if Sally Jefferson disappeared from the historical record, two facts about her case remain. She was the first woman sentenced to prison in Illinois, and she was pardoned by the governor a mere six weeks after entering Alton.

Though no reasons were given for mercy, this much is certain: Illinois' first penitentiary was ill-equipped to house

female convicts. The warden had no room and no desire to accommodate them. It would be five years before an Illinois judge sentenced a second woman to prison. It would be another two decades before the state designed a building to house women within Illinois' second penitentiary at Joliet. It would be the end of the 19th century before a separate woman's prison was built, also at Joliet. And it would be 1930 before state officials, finally bowing to the will of Illinois' reform-minded club women, opened Dwight, Illinois' first "reformatory," with the stated aim of addressing the special needs of women convicts.

**Dodge marshals** an impressive array of primary sources, including inmate jackets and parole petitions, to tell the story of Illinois' women prisoners as it evolved. And she has the credentials to give it theoretical heft. She once taught in this state's prisons and is an assistant professor of history at Westfield State College in Westfield, Mass.

Her book, published by Northern Illinois University Press, is valuable on two counts. It arrived late last year, in time to mark Women's History Month. And it offers context for a debate about this state's responsibilities regarding female crime and punishment.

In fact, *"Whores and Thieves of the Worst Kind"* landed at *Illinois Issues* just about the same time as former Gov.

George Ryan's late-September press release touting the groundbreaking of Hopkins Park women's prison. That \$100 million, 1,800-bed facility is — at last check — slated to open in 2005 in Ryan's home county of Kankakee. Pembroke Township to be precise, one of the nation's poorest communities. Hopkins Park would be Illinois' fourth existing adult women's prison. Dwight replaced the women's prison in Joliet. In 2000, Lincoln was converted to a female prison and the state opened another in Decatur. The new site was chosen because it's close to Cook County, home to most female prisoners, and because of Pembroke Township's economic needs. But the printed statement adds a third reason: Hopkins Park will ease pressure from the rising number of female offenders, the fastest-growing segment of this state's inmate population.

The Department of Corrections provided the numbers. Women are still a fraction of the state's overall adult prison population — 6 percent of 43,000 inmates. But the percentage of women inmates has been rising. In 1990, it was 4.4 percent. The rate of female admissions was more than double that of men in the back half of the 1990s. The population of adult female prisoners is growing, from 1,191 in fiscal year 1990 to 2,712 in fiscal year 2002, a 128 percent increase. The agency projects a total of 3,493 by the end of fiscal year 2004.

## FISCAL NOTE

Regular *Illinois Issues* readers might notice this month's edition has fewer pages than usual.

Like everyone else in these difficult economic times, we've been forced to make some hard choices. Among them, the decision to trim our editorial budget by a considerable amount through this fiscal year and to reduce the number of pages.

What we will not do, though, is jeopardize the quality of this magazine. Over nearly three decades, every staff member of *Illinois Issues* has been committed to keeping Illinoisans informed about the policies that affect their lives.

We won't stop. Even now. You have our word on that.

Possible reasons for the increase? Some suggest that female offenders are less likely to get a break because more women are serving on the bench, especially in Cook County. In this issue, Bethany Warner details the rise in the number of women judges in Illinois. Nearly one-third of the judges in the Cook County Circuit Court system are women. In 1991, they were only 13.2 percent of the total. Women also made gains outside Cook, but not by nearly as much. Nationally, the number of women judges is up, too. The consequences of this are difficult to track, but one study by two Indiana political scientists shows that women judges do impose harsher sentences in criminal cases. Yet more work needs to be done by researchers to identify trends in sentencing by female judges.

An easier trend to identify is the political push to get tough on drug crimes. According to the corrections department, the primary factor driving the relative growth of the female prison population has been the relative growth in their convictions for drug offenses. Between fiscal year 1990 and fiscal year 2002, the number of female drug offenders increased 270 percent, making that the most prevalent type of offense among female prisoners.

It might be better left to historians to assess reasons for the growing female prison population. In the meantime, officials provided this profile in the department's *2000 Five Year Plan for Female Inmates*: Typically, she's a 34-year-old black single mother from Cook County who has been sentenced for nonviolent crime. And she's a first-time offender. Dodge adds this: "Like their counterparts in previous centuries, women sentenced to prison today are overwhelmingly poor, marginalized and disadvantaged."

The penitentiary, she writes, "was never considered an appropriate place for punishing 'proper women.'" In the 19th century, improper meant mostly Irish and other European-born immigrants. Later, race replaced ethnicity in the social definition of female criminality. "From 1890 to 1950, African-American women, averaging approximately 4 percent of the state's female population,

were sentenced for 70 percent of all serious assaults, 57 percent of all robberies, 66 percent of all manslaughter deaths and 53 percent of all murders."

Further, female prisoners were less likely to have community or familial roots. Most were considered immoral and disreputable. And many failed at conventional forms of femininity. The number of women in Illinois prisons grew slowly, though. Between 1835 and 1930, Dodge writes, only 1,653 women were sentenced to prison in this state — fewer than 20 annually — in contrast to more than 70,000 men.

There have been spikes in the numbers of women sentenced, but they tended to occur after the capacity for housing women was expanded or prison conditions were marginally improved. Dodge maintains these rises in the number of women inmates were mere upticks. "Although today's female offenders share many similarities with women prisoners from earlier eras, they are being incarcerated in historically unprecedented numbers." She attributes this to "draconian criminal justice policies."

These are political decisions, of course. But the heart of Dodge's analysis is her assessment that crime is a social construct. She argues the decision to prosecute an act depends as much on the character of the accused, the prejudices of the prosecutor and the norms of a community as on the act itself.

"Above and beyond their legal offenses, and well into the 1960s, it was officials' estimates of women's character, particularly their moral and sexual reputations, that often determined their fate within the criminal justice system." Their reputations were compromised, too, by those of their families, husbands and friends, motivating one prison clerk in 1896 to characterize a female prisoner and her accomplices as "whores and thieves of the worst kind."

Patterns of prosecution have changed in Illinois through the decades, as has the purpose of imprisonment. But, Dodge argues, no sustained debate has accompanied these transitions.

It's time. □

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# Illinois Issues

A publication of the University of Illinois at Springfield

March 2003



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*Credits: The photograph on the cover was taken by David Msseemnaa, a senior photojournalism student at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. Msseemnaa is from Peru.*

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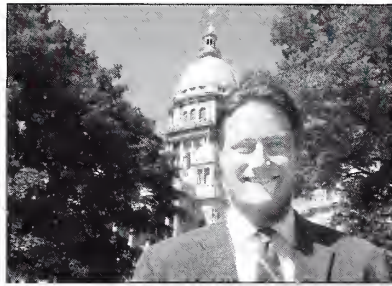
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## **Gambling is emerging as an attractive alternative to raising state taxes or cutting state services**

by Aaron Chambers

**T**he video poker machines found in bars around Illinois are perfectly legal. What's not is the widespread practice of gambling on those games.

So when bar owners collect money their patrons lose while betting on the machines, that cash goes unreported. And state government comes up empty — to the tune of an estimated \$350 million each year. That's an impressive sum for a state drowning in red ink and looking for a quick fiscal fix. At the same time, the deficit could be video poker gambling's ticket to come out from under the table.

As Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the General Assembly struggle to reconcile a deficit estimated by the governor at nearly \$5 billion for this fiscal year and the one beginning in July, increased gambling is emerging as an attractive alternative to raising taxes or drastically cutting state services. Gaming interests, their lobbyists in a frenzy, hope that translates into more business for them. Increased gaming, they argue, also would go a long way toward improving government revenues and the state's economy.

Casinos want lawmakers to eliminate the statutory cap on gaming positions — the number of people permitted to gamble at any given time. Horse racing tracks want permission

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*Ultimately, all the gaming lobbies must agree to a compromise bill that's good for the state. At least that's the goal of Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat who is chairing a special House gaming committee.*

to offer slot machines. The video poker operators, of course, want gambling on their machines to be legitimate. And horsemen — as horse owners, drivers and jockeys, and breeders are called — want to ensure that their slice of race proceeds, set by statute, does not get rolled back in the fray. They also want a substantial share of proceeds generated from any slot machines.

Ultimately, all the gaming lobbies must agree to a compromise bill that's good for the state. At least that's the goal of Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat who is chairing a special House gaming committee. He says gaming legislation this spring likely won't pass unless every interest is on board. "We all have to find

comprehensive gaming policy and if we cannot find comprehensive gaming policy and everybody is going to be in it for themselves, I think we're going to have an issue."

Yet each faction, from the state's nine riverboat casinos to its seven horse racing tracks to thousands of video poker operators, clearly is fighting to protect its own bottom line. Each is concerned about losing patrons to competition as the gaming market gets saturated.

Trying to get the groups on the same page in the legislature is delicate work. The action has largely been confined to Lang's committee, indicating a willingness on the part of gaming interests to work together. But one group, the Illinois Harness Horsemen's Association, has pushed legislation on its own, and lobbyists for other groups are quick to suggest the harness racers might jeopardize any effort at compromise.

The harness racers want to abolish a law that permits horse racing tracks to take money from a shared purse account when the state fails to appropriate a subsidy to the tracks, as it did last year. "It doesn't have to do with the slots and big bills per se," Brenda Watson, a lobbyist for the group, says of the proposal. The group maintains this must be done to put them on equal footing with the tracks before



consideration of an omnibus bill.

Lang says he appreciates the harness racers' concern but that they nonetheless should operate within the scope of his committee. "The fact is that unless we can make what they want to do part of a bill that people in the industry can support, it's probably not going to pass," he says.

Lang faces a long road to crafting an omnibus deal.

Clearly, gaming establishments pump loads of cash into state coffers and put people to work. According to the legislature's Economic and Fiscal Commission, gaming accounted for \$1.04 billion in state revenues during the fiscal year that ended last June. This includes \$470 million from riverboat gambling, \$13 million from horse racing and \$555 million from the state's lottery. But there's plenty of debate over whether increased gambling is worth associated social problems and, for that matter, whether gaming actually helps grow the state's economy.

The Illinois Casino Gaming Association trumpets a University of Illinois report that the casino industry employed more than 11,000 people and spent more than \$184 million on goods and services provided by Illinois vendors in 2001. The January report, prepared by the U of I Regional Economics Applications Laboratory, was commissioned by the casino association and the Illinois Chamber of Commerce.

The groups, during testimony before Lang's committee, emphasized the report's finding that their proposal to eliminate caps on gaming positions would create some 26,000 jobs. They maintained that their other legislative priority, rolling back the tax rate on casinos from 50 percent to 35 percent, would help fuel that growth.

But Earl Grinols, an economics professor at the U of I, suggests increased gambling is not an effective way to grow the economy. He points to other research indicating that more than 40 percent of the nation's counties with casinos actually experienced job losses. "Basically that's almost like flipping a coin," he says. "Nationwide, counties that have casinos don't seem

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***The Illinois Supreme Court  
also may help determine  
the direction of gambling,  
though it's unlikely the court  
will weigh in by the end of the  
legislature's spring session.***

to do much better or much worse."

There are several variables beyond immediate considerations in Springfield that could affect the future of gambling in Illinois.

The state's 10th casino license is tied up in bankruptcy court by license holder Emerald Casino Inc. The Illinois Gaming Board next month will resume hearings to revoke the license. It's been in limbo since 1999, when Emerald announced plans for a Rosemont casino that the board later rejected amid alleged mob ties to Emerald's investors.

Once the license is freed and sold to another casino, the state's share of the sale could be as much as \$500 million. Several suburban towns want to host the casino that claims the license.

The Illinois Supreme Court also may help determine the direction of gambling, though it's unlikely the court will weigh in by the end of the legislature's spring session. Early last month, the court agreed to hear a case involving a lawsuit filed by a group wanting the 10th license in Lake County. At issue is whether the group has standing to sue.

The group is challenging as unconstitutional a 1999 amendment to the riverboat gambling law that permitted dockside riverboat gambling and paved the way for a casino in Rosemont.

The court typically takes about a year to dispose of a case, and there's no guarantee it will address the law's constitutionality. Still, prolonged litigation could prevent the state from enjoying revenues associated with a 10th casino.

However, Blagojevich says his budget solution anticipates returning

this license to use. "That 10th license has to be up and running," he says. "That's very important to our plans."

A casino in Chicago could dramatically alter the gambling landscape as it presumably would draw patrons from the four boats already in northern Illinois, but Mayor Richard Daley has gone back and forth on whether he wants this. Last fall, Daley indicated interest in a land-based, city-owned casino. That would require a change to the state riverboat gambling law as it does not provide for land-based or government-owned casinos.

Meanwhile, the Wisconsin-based Ho-Chunk Indian tribe wants to build a casino-hotel complex in suburban Hoffman Estates. This scenario is complex, though, as tribal casinos operate largely outside the scope of state law. To secure such a casino, the tribe would need approval from Congress and the U.S. Interior Department. The tribe could then form a compact with the state and federal governments that would determine how much tax revenue, if any, the state would get.

In any case, the legislative climate this spring does favor gambling growth. Blagojevich maintains he won't increase income or sales taxes, which account for the bulk of state general revenue funds. And slashing a slew of state services is not politically feasible. In his efforts to reconcile the shortfall, he appears to be leaving the door open for more gambling.

He reiterates his campaign position that he doesn't support "expansion of gambling" but he refuses to define "expansion." Specifically, he won't say whether eliminating caps on gaming positions at casinos would constitute this. "That's open to interpretation; some people might say that it is, some people might say it's not," he says. "I haven't thought it through." He says he also hasn't "thought through" adding slots at tracks or legalizing video poker, but that these measures are not part of his budget "framework."

That's a fluid position, to be sure. Moreover, it fuels a climate that gaming interests hope will produce a winning year. □

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# BRIEFLY

## Downstate Illinois Innocence Project's first subject gets pardon

**K**eith Harris was released from prison 22 months ago, but now he's really free.

He was one of 131 people in prison for non-death penalty crimes who received clemency from former Gov. George Ryan in Ryan's last six weeks in office.

Harris had spent 22 years in jail for a crime he didn't commit. And before he left office, Ryan granted a full pardon, meaning Harris' record was expunged. The Downstate Illinois Innocence Project based at the University of Illinois at Springfield was a large part of the reason he was released.

Two years ago, students at the university took on Harris' case as the first subject of the project. Under the supervision of teachers and outside advisers, including a criminal investigator and an attorney, the students reviewed transcripts, reinterviewed participants and assisted in the preparation and presentation of the final appeal to the Illinois Prisoner Review Board. In May 2001, an appeals court found his sentence to be unduly harsh.

"The Harris case illustrates the far-reaching problem in the investigation, arrest, trial and appeal of cases in Illinois involving serious crimes —



*Keith and Mary Harris married on Valentine's Day 2002. He has a job as a construction worker.*

even cases like this that do not involve the death penalty," says Bill Clutter, a Springfield private investigator and co-founder of the Downstate Illinois Innocence Project. "Keith Harris' case particularly illustrates the problem of eyewitness misidentification."

Harris was convicted of attempted murder in 1979 and sentenced to 50 years. He was convicted, says Clutter, despite the absence of physical evidence, misidentification by a witness after multiple lineups, confessions from two other individuals who had a history of committing similar crimes and concerns from Illinois crime investigators about evidence.

Indeed, Clutter, who helped investigate the Rolando Cruz and Alejandro Hernandez innocence cases, learned of the persistence of Alva Busch, the original Illinois State Police crime scene investigator who had collected evidence for two decades, and convinced the project to take Harris' case as its first subject. Busch and Clutter are both supervising students investigating three new cases this spring, says Nancy Ford, co-founder of the project.

Harris was accused of shooting a gas station attendant in Caseyville during a robbery. However, Busch says a crime spree in the area occurred over several months, with many of the crimes taking place after Harris was in prison. Busch became convinced the authorities had the wrong person and told them so repeatedly, to the point of retribution and the loss of his job. Sometimes, Busch says, police, prosecutors and judges "let things go they shouldn't in order to save face." The innocence projects, he says, offer a kind of checks-and-balances system to the work of overzealous prosecutors.

"I always have felt I owe something to the victim and try to do the best work I can as a crime scene investigator," he says. "So we need to make sure the real killer is caught. The worst thing we can do is take an innocent person's freedom."

*Beverley Scobell*

## Chicago school reforms advance

Chicago teachers would have more room to negotiate with that city's school system, and the city could establish more charter schools, under legislation advanced quickly in the General Assembly. The measure also would require that the school system and the teachers cooperate to improve student achievement to meet standards mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind reform act.

The measure passed the Senate with bipartisan support and, in mid-February, was pending before the House. It would permit the Chicago Teachers Union to bargain collectively over such key issues as class size and layoffs.

The union and the Chicago Board of Education will begin renegotiating their contract in June.

The measure also would permit Chicago to establish 15 new charter schools, which often are designed to out-perform traditional public schools.

Chicago Teacher Union President Deborah Lynch says all three elements are crucial. "This bill is a tremendous opportunity for us to take Chicago school reform to the next level."

*Bethany K. Warner*



## LEGI CHECKLIST

*Gov. Rod Blagojevich won more time to deliver his budget proposal for the next fiscal year, moving the deadline to April 9 instead of February 19. Senate Republicans also want to give him authority to cut 5 percent out of agency appropriations to close a gap in this year's budget. With the deficit approaching an estimated \$5 billion, fiscal issues are likely to dwarf all others in the General Assembly's spring session.*

*Still, lawmakers are proposing hundreds of substantive measures: 2,544 as of mid-February. Some, including a so-called gay rights bill, have a fair shot at passage because Democrats control both chambers.*

### **Civil Rights**

The Equal Rights Amendment has risen out of the legislative ashes this spring. Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat, is heading the House effort to revive the 1972 Constitutional Amendment. The ERA passed favorably out of committee and both Democratic leaders, House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President Emil Jones, support it, rekindling hopes for ratification.

Thirty years ago, Illinois was a battleground for the amendment. If Illinois passes the ERA, it would be the 36th state to do so. Two more states would be needed. Even then, Congress would have to extend the 1982 deadline.

Another measure requiring women to be paid as much as men for the same work has been introduced by Sen. Carol

Ronen, a Chicago Democrat. Ronen is also sponsoring this spring's legislation to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.

### **Criminal justice**

The Senate will consider measures to require videotaped interrogations in all homicide and certain sexual assault cases. Sen. Barack Obama, a Chicago Democrat, is sponsoring one proposal.

Two other measures introduced by Rep. Lovana Jones, also a Chicago Democrat, would only require videotaping interrogations of suspects in cases that could result in a death sentence.

Lawmakers have yet to act on the recommendations of a commission formed by former Gov. George Ryan to review the state's Criminal Code. The panel called for total replacement of the code, which is riddled with inconsistent provisions.

### **Death penalty**

Ryan's blanket commutation has not dampened efforts to reform administration of the state's ultimate punishment. Rep. Art Turner, a Chicago Democrat, has introduced a measure to abolish the death sentence.

Another measure, sponsored by Rep. Patricia Bellock, a Hinsdale Republican, would codify into state law a U.S. Supreme Court decision that states can't execute the mentally retarded.

Meanwhile, 33 Republican representatives are backing a measure to preclude the governor from granting clemency

unless the Prisoner Review Board's recommendations on whether to grant such clemencies are made public.

### **Cloning**

Rep. Dan Reitz, a Steeleville Democrat, would ban the cloning of human beings in this state. His measure would permit cloning of human tissues for research purposes.

### **Tollways**

Reforming the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority could be a legislative priority. Blagojevich has said it's one of his. Sen. Jeffrey Schoenberg, an Evanston Democrat, and Rep. Elaine Nekritz, a Northbrook Democrat, each introduced legislation to give lawmakers oversight. The bill also would freeze toll increases pending a financial report and establish an inspector general to investigate abuse and fraud.

### **Election reform**

If the legislature creates a fund to receive federal dollars, election reform measures could receive a financial boost. The state could collect as much as \$3.6 billion from the feds over three fiscal years. The money would come with some strings attached, such as requiring state matching dollars to buy out the current punch-card voting system in an effort to prevent a Florida-style election debacle.

Though the federal government was authorized to distribute the dollars, Congress has yet to appropriate them.

*Bethany K. Warner*

## **The Illinois Channel gets a boost from Boeing**



A one-year-old public policy cable channel has received a \$50,000 grant from Boeing. "As of February 1, we are broadcasting part-time in 13 communities across the state, reaching 325,000 cable homes," says Terry Martin, Illinois Channel's executive director. He says the grant will help stretch programming and distribution over the Chicago metropolitan area. The giant airplane manufacturer moved its corporate headquarters to the city 18 months ago.

Modeled after C-SPAN, the Illinois Channel is an independent, nonpartisan corporation formed to provide televised coverage of Illinois state government and other public affairs events. Recent programming included an economic development conference in Normal, a speech

by Chief Justice Mary Ann McMorrow in Jacksonville and a meeting held by U.S. Sens. Richard Durbin and Peter Fitzgerald briefing Illinois visitors in Washington, D.C.

The project is funded primarily by the state legislature, with additional funding coming from foundations and corporations such as Boeing. Plans call for an annual operating budget of about \$3 million. The channel has 70 communities committed to carrying its programming as the money for production and distribution becomes available, Martin says. "We have achieved one goal, that of statewide distribution." Illinois Channel gains access mainly through local government stations, from Rockford to Carbondale, Macomb to Champaign-Urbana. And soon Chicago.



## Illinois' anti-terrorism funding is at risk

Responding to a terrorist attack would require equipment and training. But that equation is turning into a Catch-22.

The state has purchased radios linking police stations, hazardous materials suits and other high-tech gadgetry with \$18.3 million in federal money. But for many local governments, paying to train responders will strain already tight budgets and the federal government isn't planning to pick up the tab.

"If you can't spend the money to train people to use the equipment, what good is the equipment?" asks Jay Reardon, Northbrook fire chief and president of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, a coalition of fire departments. Sending personnel for training costs departments overtime pay and extra manpower to replace those in training.

Illinois and other states have been waiting for Congress to distribute

funds for emergency and terrorism preparedness measures (see *Illinois Issues*, May 2002, page 15). But now the wait will likely be for a much smaller sum. Regardless of how much money Illinois ultimately receives, though, the federal government stipulates states can't use it for training or reimbursing local agencies for overtime pay.

While President George W. Bush promised \$3.5 billion to the states for anti-terrorism preparedness measures, Congress is hedging on handing out that much in light of federal budget concerns. Under current congressional proposals, Illinois would receive only \$16 million to \$34 million. This is significantly less than the \$100 million anticipated under the Bush plan, says Mike Chamness, acting director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency, which is coordinating this state's anti-terrorism efforts.

Some cities that are interested in training their emergency personnel may have to opt out, Chamness says, simply because they cannot afford the extra

expense. The agency is looking for help from the Illinois congressional delegation, including Rep. Ray LaHood, a Peoria Republican named last month as chair of the House Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security.

Chamness says reduced appropriations would not leave Illinois totally vulnerable as the state has three weapons of mass destruction response teams and 32 hazardous materials teams in place. But less federal aid would limit his agency's ability to develop elite rescue teams and to provide personal protective equipment for the state's emergency responders.

The equipment, which includes a mask and filter, costs about \$300 per unit. With less federal money, the agency could only outfit 15,000 to 30,000 of the state's 80,000 responders. Further, the new initiatives — such as urban search and rescue teams — require at least 390 hours of training.

"Less money means less capability to provide a response," says Reardon.

Bethany K. Warner

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## Nina Shepherd

An alumna of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she gained distinction as the first female president of that university's board of trustees. Nina Shepherd served a total of 18 years on the board. She died of cancer January 18 at Rush North Shore Hospice in Skokie. She was 69.

A resident of Winnetka, Shepherd was elected to three six-year terms on the board of trustees, beginning in 1974. (Since 1995, the board has been appointed by the governor.) She was selected president in 1985 and 1986. She was a champion of the University of Illinois at Chicago and in the early 1980s worked to consolidate the Circle Campus and the medical school campus. She is credited with restarting UIC's undergraduate study-abroad program and helping to launch the Food for Century III project that redesigned and revitalized the status of agricultural research at Urbana.

"She was a person who was very committed to high ideals and ethics," says University of Illinois President James Stukel. "She was always reminding us of the larger goals of education."

Born in Dallas, Texas, she was raised in Decatur. After graduating from college with honors, she went on to do some graduate work at the U of I and at Northwestern. She became active in the Democratic Party, serving as a delegate to national conventions in 1972, 1976 and 1984. She ran in the Democratic primary for comptroller in 1978.

After she left the U of I board, she served on the Illinois Humanities Council. Appointed by former Gov. Jim Edgar, Shepherd served for seven years.

"She loved politics and she was a very shrewd strategist," says Kristina Valaitis, executive director of the council.

Shepherd served for the last 10 years on the advisory board for *Illinois Issues*. "She was an amazingly energetic, enthusiastic and caring individual," says Joan Levy, a fellow board member and past president of the Illinois Association of School Boards. "She had a broad range of interests and brought 100 percent of dedicated effort to any project she undertook."



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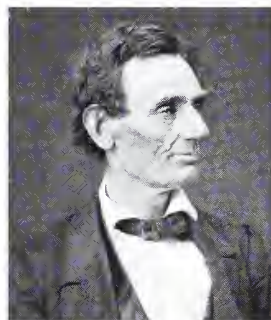


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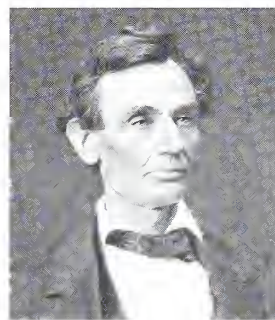
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York, the Society's plates are apparently the sole surviving set.

Matted prints of these portraits are \$150 apiece, plus tax (if applicable) and \$35 shipping and handling. They are also available in hand-crafted walnut frames for \$250 each, plus tax and \$45 shipping and



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# Out of hiding

Poverty is on the rise in Illinois and increasingly visible. It can no longer be overlooked

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by Stephanie Zimmermann and Peg Kowalczyk

It would be an easy bicycle ride down Lincoln Highway from the Lincoln Mall in Matteson to Rick's Food & Liquors in Ford Heights. Just a tad over six miles, though the traffic in this far south suburban region of Chicago would be busy at the start.

In Matteson, middle-class shoppers buy cosmetics at Carson Pirie Scott, motorists gas up SUVs at Mobil, Citgo or Shell, parents fill shopping carts at Jewel and Cub Foods and executives dine at Olive Garden, Red Lobster or Fazoli's.

As the road heads into Ford Heights, though, the scenery changes. The pharmacies and hotels cede to a currency exchange and a couple of corner stores selling cheap beer. There are no gas stations, no supermarkets — certainly not a bank. Vacant properties abound, as do burglar bars. This town of 3,456 is beset by formidable problems: unemployment, inadequate education levels and a lack of quality housing. Sociologist Pierre DeVise once called it the poorest suburb in America. In the last U.S. Census, Ford Heights earned

the dubious distinction of having the highest percentage in America — 34 percent — of households headed by single mothers.

Gloria Bryant, executive director of the Ford Heights Community Service Organization, has been battling the town's problems for more than three decades, starting as a volunteer and working her way up. Child care classes, computer training, a food pantry and other programs Bryant coordinates aim to bridge the gap between welfare reform and a lethargic economy. But

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## Cairo 2002

The class came to be known as the Cairo Project. Last year, 24 Southern Illinois University students in Carbondale captured Cairo, its people and its problems.

At first they shot buildings. "I stopped them and said you have to deal with people," said their instructor Phil Greer. The images were taken between August and December of last year.



*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*

*A clocktower in Cairo's downtown offers 14-year-olds Jamie Wiggins and Sharicka Smith a place to talk.*



jobless men still mill about outside the community center, which also draws residents of such neighboring towns as Sauk Village and Lynwood.

Neighborhoods in Ford Heights, once filled with tidy homes populated by blue-collar workers, are pockmarked by sagging porches, potholes, vacant lots and uncollected garbage, monuments to the region's economic tailspin. Half of the residents ages 16 and over are unemployed. One in four households makes less than \$10,000 a year. Ninety-six percent African American, the town is a symbol of racially concentrated, female-headed poverty in America.

"Without some supportive services, they're going to continue to remain at the bottom of the economic scale," says Bryant, speaking about the single moms she works with. "Some of them feel like, 'What's the use, I'm never going to work out of this situation.'"

About 50 miles north and west, in wealthy DuPage County, another sort of poverty exists. It's not as obvious as in Ford Heights. In DuPage, among the shopping malls, chain restaurants, glitzy office buildings and well-appointed schools there are concentrated pockets

of poor and working poor residents. They moved there to take such service jobs as cashier or cleaner and can barely pay their rent. "There are folks who have gotten minimum wage jobs, and it's tough to live on that," says Roger Johnson, executive director of the DuPage County office of Metropolitan Family Services, a nonprofit organization.

Six hours down I-57 to the southern-most tip of the state, where the Mississippi and Ohio rivers meet, is yet another pocket of Illinois poverty: Alexander County and its county seat, Cairo. There, amid crumbling 19th century mansions, a history of segregationism and steady economic decline have conspired to make Cairo one of the most impoverished places in the state. The city's population has dwindled every decade since 1920 — from a high of 15,205 to the current low of 3,632 — prompting the principal of Cairo High School to advise the 1990 graduating class to leave.

"There is still no industry here and many still don't have jobs," says lifelong Cairo resident Sarah Gatewood, resource officer for the school truancy

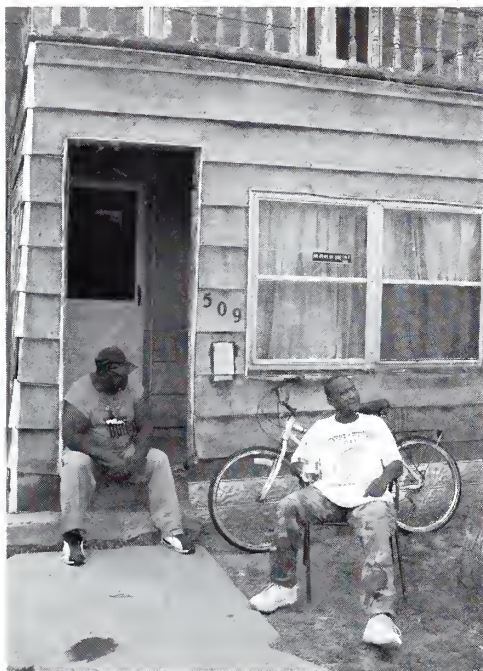
program. "People are in a state of depression."

In the images they conjure in the minds of Illinoisians, Ford Heights, the suburbs of DuPage County and Cairo are about as different as three places could be. But like dozens of other locales in Illinois, they are faced with the problems of poverty and the challenges of making welfare reform succeed. The aggravating factors may vary — from a lack of child care in Ford Heights to unaffordable housing in wealthy DuPage to a failing local economy in Cairo — but there are common threads.

"Whether you're poor in Ford Heights or you're poor in Alexander County or you're poor in DuPage County, everybody wants to hide you," says antipoverty activist Doug Dobmeyer. It's hard for most Illinoisans to understand how entrenched poverty is, "and if they don't understand, they can ignore it."

*After several years* of improvement, the percentage of Illinois families at or below the federal poverty line is again increasing, to almost 12 percent

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*Gathering places are hard to come by.*

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*When their teachers were on strike last year, these teens killed some time playing baseball on Commercial Street.*

of the population — or nearly 1.5 million Illinoisians — last year, according to the *2002 Report on Illinois Poverty* by the Illinois Poverty Summit, a diverse group of political, business and nonprofit leaders that convenes annually to find ways to end poverty. Thirty-nine of Illinois' 102 counties have a serious problem with poverty, the report concludes.

The depth of poverty in this state gained national attention last September, when, in a page one story, *The New York Times* profiled Pembroke Township in Kankakee County as one of the poorest areas in the nation.

Experts caution that the number of families struggling financially in Illinois actually is much higher than the numbers reveal because the federal poverty threshold of \$18,400 for a family of four is much too low to be meaningful, especially in places where housing and other basic needs are expensive. Many social service agencies use 185 percent or even 200 percent of the poverty rate to determine who qualifies. With that income, "you're probably still really struggling to make ends meet," says

Amy Rynell, director of the Heartland Alliance's Mid-America Institute on Poverty.

The good news is that Illinois' public aid rolls have dropped by about 76 percent since welfare reform began in the mid-1990s. But that advance also has increased the ranks of the working poor, many of whom have multiple jobs yet must endure high housing costs, poor transportation, no health insurance and substandard child care.

"The issues just pile up on you," says John Bouman, deputy director for advocacy for the National Center on Poverty Law, based in Chicago. "Many of the people who used to be on welfare and are working are still in poverty and they're staying there."

In downstate Cairo, 47 percent of children live in poverty, according to the 2000 Census. Alexander County's poverty rate of 26.1 percent was the highest of any county in the state, and its infant mortality rate of 15.4 percent from 1998 to 2000 was the state's second-highest.

The Elias Ace Hardware in Cairo is open, but the Shell is closed. The Washateria is open, but the CutMart

has closed. There is no McDonald's, no Burger King, no Arby's. There is no recreation center, no bowling alley, no movie theater. The Spirit House — for liquor — is open, but the Christ Temple — for souls — is closed. Churches are for sale, prices reduced. The Martin CME Temple on Poplar Street is available, its public auction sign nailed to a dead tree stump.

Congregating in the streets is now the recreational pastime. At 24th and Sycamore, a former swimming pool is permanently filled with concrete and grown over with weeds, the city's response to court-ordered integration.

In Cairo, the issue of poverty can't be separated from the issue of race. Gatewood remembers when the city's black citizens couldn't get work in white-owned businesses and when rural whites from Kentucky and Missouri were hired instead of local blacks. She recalls when the Illinois National Guard was called into Cairo in 1967 to quell racial violence.

A coalition of black organizations formed the United Front of Cairo in 1969, and the community sustained a three-year boycott of white-owned

## Cairo 2002

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*St. Mary's Hospital is now abandoned.*

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*When the religious order that ran the hospital pulled out of town, it left everything behind, including patient records.*



businesses. By 1971, there was nothing left to picket. Downtown businesses had closed.

"When the smoke cleared, we still had nothing," says Norma Jean Vasser, who has lived in Cairo for nearly 50 years. "White businesses closed their doors rather than integrate."

Preston Ewing, Cairo's city treasurer and resident historian, doesn't have unrealistic expectations for the city that once boasted seven railroads and attracted shoppers from across the southern Illinois region. "Our goal should be to stabilize Cairo, not talk about growth," he says. "Potential employers will go where there is greater viability and an infrastructure to support businesses."

Similarly, in Ford Heights, decades of poverty have created a situation that is difficult for residents to escape. Once a stop for fleeing slaves, later a farming community and finally a largely working class suburb of African Americans who worked in the area's auto and steel industries, the former East Chicago Heights began to falter in the 1960s.

Federal public housing programs rapidly drew large numbers of impover-

ished black Chicagoans to town, and that, coupled with the region's economic decline, severely strained the community. Because Ford Heights has become synonymous with poverty and crime, it is not on the A-list of most businesses looking to relocate. And residents who do find success frequently move away because the housing stock is so poor.

That's what Gloria Bryant did. After living in Ford Heights for 48 years, she finally moved south to Crete, where the housing choices were better.

"Those who become upwardly mobile in some manner normally move out of the community, and they are replaced by other people who are low-income like they were," Bryant says. "The community changes, but somehow, the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Bryant is hoping some of the single moms who take the computer and child care classes at the community center will one day become self-sufficient. But they and their children won't have an easy time. Statistics show it's much harder for families to pull themselves out of poverty when there's only one wage-earner.

Of Illinois children who were living in poverty between 1998 and 2001, 61.6 percent were in a female-headed household, the Illinois Poverty Summit report says. And those youngsters are less likely to do well in school. At Cottage Grove Middle School in Ford Heights, educators managed to get 28.2 percent of the students to meet or exceed state testing standards in 2002, after a dismal showing of just 11.6 percent in 2001. What Ford Heights offers is a community of strong people, Bryant says.

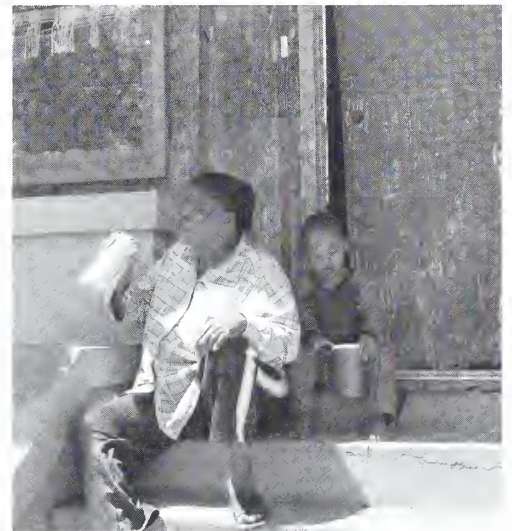
Meanwhile, DuPage County, with its high-tech industry and pricey homes, doesn't suffer this reputation. But, like some other wealthy counties in Illinois, its poverty rate is quietly climbing. Though still low in proportion to the entire county's population, DuPage's poverty rate increased 33 percent, from 2.7 percent of the population in 1989 to 3.6 percent in 1999. In the community of Addison, the poverty rate more than doubled in that period, from 4.7 percent to 9.6 percent. In addition, there are 50,000 working poor households in DuPage County (defined as people living at or below 200 percent

*Courtesy of the Cano Project*



*Historic homes date back to before the Civil War.*

*Courtesy of the Cano Project*





of the federal poverty rate), according to the DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform.

Low-income residents in places like DuPage County are forced to choose between paying their rent or going to the doctor, living in a safe home or having child care, keeping the phone on or having enough food. An estimated 45,000 to 63,000 people in DuPage, for instance, have no health insurance. And between January and March of last year, an average of 8,424 DuPage County households turned to food pantries each month.

DuPage has job opportunities — but many are service jobs that don't pay a living wage. It's pretty much impossible for a family of four to live on a minimum wage salary in Illinois, assuming 30 percent of the household's income as a benchmark amount for rent. In DuPage County, a person would have to earn at least \$15.15 an hour — almost three times the minimum wage — to afford a two-bedroom apartment with a monthly rent of \$788, the county's fair-market average, according to the DuPage Federation.

## A survivor's story

Norma Jean Vasser's children grew up in Cairo when the schools, the restaurants and the swimming pool were segregated. She raised them when the historic Magnolia Manor — which once housed former U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant — permitted blacks in the mansion only as workers. Now the historic home holds no appeal for the children whose parents were subject to decades of systematic racism, says Vasser, who has lived in Cairo 49 years.

In this difficult environment she raised her eight children, 31 foster children and one adopted child. She easily rattles off the years her kids were born, all within a decade. Her husband brought home \$49 a week to feed a family of 10. He was handy with a hunting rifle; she was handy in the garden. Then came the foster kids — the DCFS-official children and those unofficial boarders she would find some mornings asleep on her living room floor seeking sanctuary and supper.

Vasser was 53 when the latest needy child walked into her life. "Momma, I seen a baby walking down the highway," Vasser's son told her. A day later, a social worker brought the same wandering child, 3-year-old Cynthia, "just for the weekend."

Cynthia was born in prison, has never known her mother, and her father died shortly after Vasser took her in. The little girl weighed 28 pounds. "You could count every bone in her back," Vasser says. When the adoptive mom handed the child a Popsicle, the tot didn't know what to do, forlornly watching the treat drip down her hand. Cynthia didn't talk for three months. When she finally spoke, she requested peanut butter and jelly sandwiches — a stale stockpile was later found under the 3-year-old's bed, the child's response to a young life of hunger. That was 14 years ago. At 67, Vasser is raising a teenager.

The two live on 19th Street at Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, next to the windowless Heavenly Gates Funeral Home. Vasser's car sits idle on the lawn. It will take \$400 in repairs to run again, money she doesn't have.

Without the car, she can no longer serve as mentor in a regional program that links needy children with caring adults. A mentoring project recruiter describes Vasser — who took the children she mentored camping and fishing — as exceptional. But dependable

## Cairo 2002



*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*

*Hobert Lambert, a World War II veteran, often takes a stroll downtown on Sunday afternoon.*



*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*

*In Cairo, 47 percent of the children live in poverty.*

transportation is a program requirement. Like the car standing sentry on her lawn, Vasser's volunteering days were halted.

Vasser lives on \$9,000 a year from social security, gets assistance from a county home energy program and "puts up greens" she discovered in an abandoned field at Horseshoe Lake just up the road. Taking a trash bag and a fishing pole to the swampy lake pays dividends in free greens and crappie, says Vasser. Neither she nor Cynthia is a big eater. "I'm a country girl who doesn't have a steak-and-potatoes appetite." Mother and daughter manage.

Like the broken car, her old washing machine "is done," says Vasser. A clean toilet plunger and a bathtub are all she really needs, she says. A replacement machine wouldn't work even if she could acquire one, she says. The old home doesn't have the required 220 electrical line.

The lot next door is for sale, the familiar public auction notice nailed to a tree. Across the street, the former home Vasser bought for \$700 is a pile of rubble. It caught fire three times — a kerosene heater, a cigarette and lightning were the culprits — before the ceiling finally called it quits and caved in. Next door to the rubble, lightning struck again just last month, damaging the home where her grown son lives.

Vasser's current house, built in 1857 for \$750, is older than the famed Magnolia Manor and Riverlore a few blocks away. But the homes in Vasser's neighborhood don't claim spots on the National Register of Historic Places. Like the fluctuating Cairo economy, the house was bought and sold dozens of times through its 146-year history — once for \$50, another time for \$300 — far below its original selling price. She spent 10 years renting the four-room house, but Vasser's landlord recently made her an offer: Buy the home for \$5,000, no money down, continue the \$224 monthly rental payments. She couldn't lose. After two years, the home was Vasser's, but so was the surprise \$1,370 in back taxes, for which Vasser was legally responsible.

While teetering on the edge of poverty, in a city fighting foreclosure, this family matriarch perseveres. Says Vasser, "I've always had a roof over my head, food in my stomach and the good Lord at my side."

*Peg Kowalczyk*

Further, traveling from work to school to day care and to the doctor's office can be a nightmare for impoverished suburbanites, says Johnson of Metropolitan Family Services. "There's not a bus system that operates on a grid. If you're in an apartment complex somewhere, you can really be isolated." And owning a car can eat up a lot of money. Workers making \$12 an hour spend about 20 percent of their income on transportation; minimum wage earners (\$5.15 an hour) spend about 45 percent.

The working poor can seem invisible among the affluent suburbs of DuPage, says Candace King, executive director of the DuPage Federation. "We call that 'DuPage Syndrome.' People think the streets here are lined with gold. And they aren't."

***Whether it's poverty*** in Ford Heights, Cairo or the suburbs of DuPage County, if society expects people to get off welfare — and studies show families do better once people are back in the workforce — Illinois has to offer support to lift

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*Churches are for sale, prices reduced.*

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*Antwan Petty, 5, heads out of Tiffany's Diner and convenience store, which is one of the few places for young people to hang out.*



them from being “working poor” to the next level, says Dan Lewis, professor of education and social policy at Northwestern University in Evanston and director of the university consortium that administers the Illinois Families Study. That study is following more than 1,100 poor Illinois families to see how they are faring under welfare reform.

“You can declare victory when you get people off public housing, you can declare victory when you get people off welfare, but you’re wishing them luck in their ability to take care of themselves and their kids,” Lewis says.

Illinois has done some things right, Lewis says. Some of Illinois’ welfare reform policies are considered moderate or even generous when compared to other states: For example, Illinois allows “stopped clock” exceptions for people who work 30 hours a week, attend college or meet other requirements, helping them avoid reaching their 60-month lifetime limit on receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. Its Work Pays program ignores two-thirds of the worker’s job income when determining how much assistance he or she will receive. Illinois

also offers subsidized health insurance for kids in families with incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty rate.

Those supports must continue — and be strengthened, argues Lewis. Policy-makers, he says, shouldn’t forget they have an obligation to make sure those families who have been pushed off welfare don’t fail.

Those fighting poverty are crossing their fingers that having Gov. Rod Blagojevich and his fellow Democrats in power in Springfield will help their cause — though no one is counting on a lot of extra dollars for social services, given the state’s dismal financial situation.

Lewis has advice for the new power base in Springfield: “The main point that I’d make to the governor is don’t be short-sighted in terms of quick fixes,” such as cutting Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid or other supports, he says. “Those investments are what make low-wage earners able to stay in the workforce, and that’s where we want them.”

But Lewis is realistic. “If the governor and the General Assembly go out and do a lot of taxing and spending, there won’t be a Blagojevich II.”

Gov. Blagojevich, after running a campaign heavy on a theme of helping working people, does favor some supports, such as an increase in the minimum wage, which spokesman Billy Weinberg says will send dollars flowing into the economy faster than a tax cut for upper-income earners. The governor also favors increased child care and senior care programs. But specifics are taking a back seat, for now, to dealing with the state budget deficit, which the governor says could reach \$4.8 billion by the end of this next fiscal year.

“I think that anyone who is really committed to welfare reform understands that you do have to, to a certain degree, provide people with the tools they need,” Weinberg says.

In Ford Heights, Gloria Bryant tries to stay away from political prognosticating. She’s too busy filling out grant applications.

“Politicians are people. I don’t care what label you put on them,” she says. Now, all she can do is hope. □

*Stephanie Zimmermann is a reporter at the Chicago Sun-Times. Peg Kowalczyk is a Carbondale-based free-lance writer.*

## Cairo 2002

*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*



*Courtesy of the Cairo Project*





# WHY THE RICH GET RICHER

## WEALTH AND DEMOCRACY

Kevin Phillips, *Random House*, 2002

## THE FUTURE OF SUCCESS

Robert B. Reich, *Alfred A. Knopf*, 2001

---

by Aaron Chambers

Illustration by Kathleen Riley

America's poor may need to lie on their backs to get a proper view of the rich. The wealthy are that high up the economic ladder. This isn't new. The financial distance between rich and poor dates from this country's founding.

So does the power the rich wield in the public arena. Inevitably, debates over economic policy pit one class against the other. Such deliberations can determine how much money will go into which pockets. And on that score, the rich usually win.

Historian Kevin Phillips explores this phenomenon in his new book *Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich*. After serving as chief political strategist for former Republican President Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign, Phillips wrote a series of books critical of GOP economic ideology. This is the latest.

It lays out a historical context as Congress considers President George W. Bush's economic stimulus package. The outcome of this debate could determine whether inequality of wealth in this country, now at a historic high, will be diminished or exacerbated.

There is a moral component to this. But there's a practical consideration as well: In a democratic society, government decides to what extent policy perpetuates wealth at the expense of everybody else.

Phillips begins *Wealth and Democracy* by discussing the evolution of this notion. As it happens, the rise of a

wealthy class in this country goes hand in glove with the new government's ties to key individuals. Despite warnings from the likes of Thomas Jefferson that America could grow to mirror British aristocracy with its concentrations of wealth, the colonies relied on individuals who then became rich by financing and supplying the French and Indian and the Revolutionary wars.

"Although no careful accounting has ever been managed," Phillips writes, "it is likely that from the 1780s through the turn of the century, every millionaire — eight or ten perhaps, possibly fifteen — owed a fair part of his wealth to wartime or postwar connections to the new government."

Phillips spends the rest of his 472-page book tracing this relationship through three key periods in American history that he believes encouraged the greatest concentration of wealth and power. The Gilded Age in the late 1800s was the first. Then came the Roaring Twenties of the last century. The third period, of particular interest to those following the debate surrounding Bush's proposed tax cuts, was the 1990s. Phillips calls this period the Second Gilded Age.

Each of these periods followed a major war — the Civil War, World War I and the Vietnam War — which spurred government spending and inflation, and permitted some parts of the economy to boom. The first two periods prompted a populist backlash that forced the federal government to put restrictions on

commerce, and, as a result, strengthened the hand of the nonwealthy. The third boom, of course, has just wound down. Phillips, who argues that "corporate aggrandizement" since the 1980s went beyond that of the Gilded Age, believes the country is ripe for another historical correction.

"As the twenty-first century gets underway, the imbalance of wealth and democracy in the United States is unsustainable, at least by traditional yardsticks," he writes. "Market theology and unelected leadership [such as Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan] have been displacing politics and elections. Either democracy must be renewed, with politics brought back to life, or wealth is likely to cement a new and less democratic regime — plutocracy by some other name."

Though he doesn't address the subject, it's easy to imagine what Phillips would make of Bush's tax cut plan, the centerpiece of which is elimination of most taxes on stock dividends. Opponents argue that move would largely benefit the richest taxpayers because stock ownership still is heavily skewed toward upper-income households.

For his part, Bush calls the current system double taxation. "It is fair to tax a company's profits," Bush said during his State of the Union speech in late January. "It is not fair to again tax the shareholder on the same profits."

Nevertheless, critics charge Bush with nothing less than inciting class warfare.

A Federal Reserve report issued in late January would seem to buttress their case. The Federal Reserve's *Survey of Consumer Finances*, based on interviews with 4,449 families in the second half of 2000, concludes that while the economic boom of the late 1990s boosted the wealth of almost all American families, the gap between the rich and the rest of society sharply increased between 1997 and 2000.

The median net worth of most families — assets minus debt — rose 10.4 percent to \$86,100, but the net worth of the wealthiest families rose 69 percent to \$833,600. The net worth of families in the lowest fifth of income earners rose 25 percent to \$7,900.

Further, the report shows that more than half of America's families own stocks either directly or through their mutual funds and pension plans — a point Bush supporters say would make the dividend tax cut valuable to a broad range of American taxpayers. But the report also suggests that the increase in stock wealth has been narrow. While the median holding of stock among all stock-owning families increased 26 percent to \$34,000, the median holding of the richest 10 percent increased 69 percent to \$248,000.

In short, the stock market boom was felt mainly by a small group of wealthy households, and those households also suffered the brunt of the subsequent bust. The market hit a five-year low last October.

Census data also indicates a growth in the income gap. The Economic Policy Institute, a liberal research group based in Washington, D.C., crunched U.S. Census data collected in 2000 and concluded that income disparities between the top 20 percent of families and families at the bottom grew in all but five states over the previous two decades after adjusting for inflation.

Illinois was one state where the disparity widened. During that 20-year period, income of the top fifth of earners grew 37.6 percent while that of bottom fifth grew only 10.5 percent. The incomes of the top 5 percent in this state, meanwhile, grew an average of 49.8 percent.

Still, census data suggests that Illinoisans generally improved their incomes in the 1990s. The share of households reporting income of less than \$10,000 decreased from 14.2 percent at the beginning of the decade to 8.3 percent at the end. The percentage of households falling below \$50,000 likewise decreased. The remaining income brackets increased their shares of households.

Put in terms of the income pie, 2.8 percent of this state's 4.6 million households, or those with aggregate household income of \$200,000 or more, claimed 16.4 percent, or \$46.5 billion, of total aggregate household income in 2000.

Keep in mind that official census data understate the income of families at the top and bottom of the distribution scale by not accounting for capital gains or noncash government benefits such as food stamps, school lunches and housing subsidies. The data, based on pretax income, also do not account for the effect of federal and state tax systems.

***Tax policy is a critical*** part of the equation in any discussion of wealth inequality. Proponents of so-called supply-side economics, championed by Bush and former President Ronald Reagan, argue the economy is stimulated best by giving money back to those who will invest it. Theoretically, that investment leads to higher employment, productivity and output in the national economy. Opponents of the supply-side theory argue the economy is better stimulated when tax cuts are directed at middle-income consumers who will actually buy goods and services.

Phillips cites an 1896 critique of supply-side economics by William Jennings Bryan, a three-time Democratic presidential nominee: "There are those who believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through on those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests above them."

Conservatives dismiss Phillips' premise. Chris Edwards, director of fiscal policy studies at the Washington, D.C.-based Cato Institute, points to Internal Revenue Service figures that show the rich pay a disproportionate share of income taxes. According to the IRS, the top 1 percent of federal individual income taxpayers (those with annual incomes over \$313,469) made 20.8 percent of the income earned in 2000 and paid 37.4 percent of the total federal individual income taxes reported that year. That percentage of the income tax burden is up from 25.1 percent in 1990.

"I would say that a benefit to the folks at the bottom is having the rich peoples' income grow faster because the rich people end up paying an even larger share of the federal income taxes," Edwards says.

Phillips notes this debate is an old one. And in his view, those with the greatest share of the wealth have won most of these contests.

"From the nursery years of the Republic, U.S. government economic decisions in matters of taxation, central bank operations, debt management, banking, trade and tariffs, and financial rescues or bailouts have been keys to expanding, shrinking, or realigning the nation's privately held assets." Occasionally, he adds, policy tilted toward the lower and middle classes, as under Jefferson, Andrew Jackson and Franklin D. Roosevelt. But for the most part, it was designed to benefit the financial and business classes.

A decade after the Civil War ended, for instance, while the nation struggled through a depression in the general economy, America's great fortunes were made, and the gap between the rich and the rest of society grew. This is the period Mark Twain labeled the Gilded Age.

The likes of John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie grew their wealth on oil, steel, railroads and coal. Meanwhile, the courts and the U.S. Senate, then elected by state legislatures, were pro-business. Labor organization was suppressed. Farmers faced insolvency amid industrial growth. And, Phillips writes, the



banking system removed capital from agricultural areas in Midwestern or Plains states to urban centers or larger centers in the east.

"Whether presidents were Democrats or Republicans mattered little in philosophy or management of the economy between the mid-1870s and 1896 because the nation's political culture was in the grip of laissez-faire and social Darwinism — the mock-scientific notion that millionaire capitalists represented a 'survival of the fittest' selection process."

Still, that period was followed by the so-called Progressive Era. Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, was elected amid populist agitation stemming from a depression in 1893. He considered the excessive accumulations of wealth of the late 19th century an incitement to class warfare and proposed an income tax, arguing the rich had an obligation that should be fulfilled through higher taxes.

And Democrat Woodrow Wilson put the federal income tax in the U.S. Constitution. His legacy also includes creation of the Federal Reserve, the Federal Trade Commission and a key antitrust law.

The "new economic circumstances and mood helped counter Gilded Age wealth and income trends," Phillips writes, and "farmers and workers seem to have gained

ground." But World War I was "lucrative for corporations and the rich," especially companies supplying the war effort.

The Roaring Twenties, which followed that war, brought innovation, including Henry Ford's automobile, which became available to many Americans. That new industry fueled others, including oil and steel. Consumer demand and commercial momentum accelerated. Corporations restructured. And the GOP Congress enacted a range of tax cuts.

Yet, as Phillips posits, the "blaze of opportunity was turning into a

speculative conflagration." That bubble burst in 1929, bringing on the Great Depression.

Thus, Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in the 1930s instituted further restrictions on business. The Democrat sparked an enormous expansion of the federal government, passage of a minimum wage and creation of Social Security.

The end of World War II spurred the rise of the middle class. But in the 1990s, the middle class, those families earning between \$35,000 and \$75,000, worked longer hours for stagnating wages and declining health and retirement benefits.

Robert Reich, former labor secretary under President Bill Clinton, devoted his latest book *The Future of Success* to this concern. He calls the current era the Age of the Terrific Deal after the seemingly limitless choices facing consumers. But there's a price attached to this freedom, he argues: Entrepreneurs, those who produce the choices, must work relentlessly.

"We will shortly be presented with vastly better deals and greater opportunities," he writes. "Yet we, and every society, will have to cope with a much greater degree of social upheaval, and struggle more arduously with the escalating demands of work on the rest of our lives."

Despite this forecast, there appears to be no clear political backlash on the horizon. Then again, the Progressive Era's backlash of the early 1900s was decades in the making. □





# Political calculations

Faced with a cash-strapped budget, state lawmakers might be willing to risk a raid on the five public pension systems

by Doug Finke

Illustration by Kathleen Riley

Hungry for money to fill a reputed \$5 billion budget hole, state lawmakers are eyeing \$1.9 billion earmarked for pension systems.

Raiding the five state-funded systems could carry a political price for lawmakers who vote to divert the cash. But because cuts to popular programs such as education, health care and public safety are a very real possibility, and because Gov. Rod Blagojevich has ruled out increases in income or sales taxes, it's a risk they might be willing to take.

"I think more people will be looking at this option," says Rep. Kurt Granberg, a Carlyle Democrat. "You could suspend [pension system payments] for one year and get a considerable amount of money."

That doesn't mean Granberg favors this option. He was the principal author of the 1994 plan designed to fund 90 percent of the state's projected pension liability by 2045. That plan, which is now law, requires the state to make automatic

annual catch-up payments.

That those payments eat up such a large portion of the budget is a consequence of another period of

tight budgets two decades ago. But the problem has been aggravated by well-intentioned increases in pension benefits over the years and by the nation's current economic malaise.

The temptation to dip into these funds is heightened by the knowledge that pension benefits aren't threatened by the move. They are guaranteed by the state constitution and would have to be paid even if the systems go bankrupt. And, with combined assets of more than \$40 billion, that won't happen if dollars are diverted from the funds for a year.

Still, the state's pension fund problems would be compounded over the long term. "You are just deferring the liability," Granberg says. "Eventually taxpayers are going to have to come forward with the funds."

**There are five** pension systems that get a direct infusion of state tax dollars each year. They cover state workers, university employees, teachers outside the city of Chicago, judges



and lawmakers. In the current budget, the state contributed a total of \$1.63 billion to the systems. In the next budget, that amount will increase to nearly \$1.9 billion.

Under even the most optimistic estimates, the \$250 million increase in pension contributions alone will eat up most of the general revenue growth the state expects to take in over the next budget year. And that revenue growth is the same pot of money needed to cover increased expenses for state employee pay raises and health insurance, as well as health care for the poor, education and public safety.

But under the 1994 law, pension system dollars come off the top. The amount of that increase is set by actuaries who determine how much money is needed for the state to comply.

Granberg's plan was prompted by the dismal condition of the pension funds at the time, a condition that was the direct result of lawmakers doing exactly what they are talking about doing now — diverting money from the pension systems to use on other state spending. In the 1980s, though, those diversions weren't a one-time fix, but an almost-routine fact of budgeting life.

Granberg's plan was designed to reverse that trend by providing for increased state contributions over the first 15 years, called a ramp-up, then steady funding for another 35.

The most important part of the plan, though, stipulated that pension contributions would be made automatically. No longer would the amount given to pensions be subject to end-of-session budget negotiations.

To make the plan more palatable, the funding scheme for the ramp-up was "back loaded," meaning the

biggest contributions came at the end of the first 15 years. The result is that the biggest increases are coming due now, precisely when the state is in the throes of another budget crisis.

The fiscal impact of this is significant. In the 1995 budget — the last one before the plan took effect — the state contributed \$544.8 million to the five pension funds, compared to \$1.9 billion that is scheduled for this next fiscal year.

*The price tag* is not due solely to the Granberg plan. Pension benefits have been increased in the years since that plan became law. When those benefits increase, so does the amount the state must pay into the systems. In the 1999 state budget, for example, the amount of money appropriated to the State Employees Retirement System increased a whopping \$115 million. That system's executive secretary, Bob Knox, says a substantial part of the increase was due to an across-the-board improvement in state employee pensions approved the previous year.

Even pension changes designed to save the state money overall carry a cost. The state employees' fund is supposed to get a nearly \$102 million increase in the next budget. However, \$70 million of that is the result of the early retirement incentive package approved last spring. Still, that move is supposed to save the state money in the long run by enticing higher paid employees to retire.

There's a third reason the pension systems have become more costly just when the state can least afford it. The pension plans get their money from employee contributions, from state contributions and from money earned by investing those contributions. But, just like a wage earner who has watched his 401k shrink with the

falling stock market, the pension systems have watched their investment portfolios suffer. Those dwindling investments mean the pension funds are less well-funded, which means more money must be pumped into them to comply with the state's payment law.

Yet some lawmakers are using the drop in the market as justification to reduce the pension contribution. They argue losses in the stock market will be recovered in the future.

If the General Assembly decides to use pension money for other state spending, the deal cannot be done simply with a handshake between the governor and four legislative leaders.

"We could suspend or repeal the [funding law], but it takes affirmative action by the legislative branch," says Rep. Gary Hannig, a Litchfield Democrat, the chief budget negotiator for the House Democrats.

That means there will be a record of legislators voting to take money from pensions — a vote that could come back to haunt a lawmaker if state employee or teachers unions decide to make it an issue in an election campaign.

The threat could scare enough lawmakers that a raid on the pension money is thwarted. But if enough support can be mustered this spring to take pension money, some lawmakers wonder where it will end.

"If you do it once, it makes that option more readily available in the future," Granberg says. □

*Doug Finke is a Statehouse reporter for the State Journal-Register of Springfield and Copley Illinois Newspapers. His previous piece for Illinois Issues on the new governor's personnel challenges appeared in January.*



# Through the glass ceiling

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It's clear that the number of women judges is on the rise in Cook County. The consequences of this trend are harder to track

by **Bethany K. Warner**

The sign on the door used to read "Men Only." A woman could be at the top of her law school class, but she wasn't getting into the judiciary. In recent years, though, women have chipped that figurative sign off the door of the Cook County Circuit Court, and a growing number of them are becoming judges.

This increase is attributed largely to the creation of judicial subcircuits within that county, and to a rise in the sheer number of women lawyers.

The consequences of this trend are harder to track. Some observers say women bring much needed diversity and broader perspectives to the courtroom. "Certainly from the public's point of view," says Circuit Judge Julia Nowicki of Cook County's chancery division, "it makes for great confidence in the system to see someone like you." Thirty years ago, she says, the Cook County bench was filled with Irishmen.

Yet the impact of female jurisprudence has to be fully explored. Researchers are identifying trends in decision-making and sentencing by female judges, but admit more work needs to be done.

Meanwhile, the ranks of female judges are increasing. Nearly one-third of the judges, 126 of 401, in the Cook County Circuit Court system are now women. In 1991, when *Chicago Lawyer* magazine started tracking diversity in the circuit, only 13.2 percent, or 51, of the circuit's 385 judges were women.

These gains follow on the heels of women's gains in the Illinois legislature. In 1979, women comprised only 11 percent of the 236-member General Assembly. They made rapid gains in the 1980s and early '90s, but women haven't

increased their numbers much in the legislature for several years.

Yet since the mid-'90s, women have been making consistent gains in the judiciary. Today they serve at every level of Illinois' court system — and in ever-growing numbers.

These gains match a national trend. Constance Belfiore, executive director of the National Association of Women Judges, says the number of women on the bench nationwide is increasing, though her evidence is anecdotal. Neither her group nor the National Center for State Courts has a clear count of women judges nationwide. In Illinois, tracking the increase statewide requires some extrapolation. According to the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, for instance, women account for 216 of the 935 active state and federal judges, compared to only eight of the 363 registered retired judges.

It is clear, though, that the number of women judges is on the rise in Cook County. And Marlene Kurilla, a vice president of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois and partner with Cremer, Kopon, Shaughnessy & Spina in Chicago, ascribes this increase to the sub-circuit system, created by the legislature in 1989. Though that county constitutes its own judicial circuit, it was divided into 15 subcircuits with roughly equal population, a move designed to help minorities and Republicans make gains. Though they serve the entire circuit, judges are elected from smaller geographical areas, and minorities and women have benefited from this chance to be elected without the substantial political war chest needed to run

circuitwide.

While Cook County is the only circuit with subcircuits, state Sen. Terry Link, a Vernon Hills Democrat, introduced a measure this spring to create judicial subcircuits in Will, DuPage, Lake and McHenry counties. Link says the measure is not designed to help women make gains in those circuits.

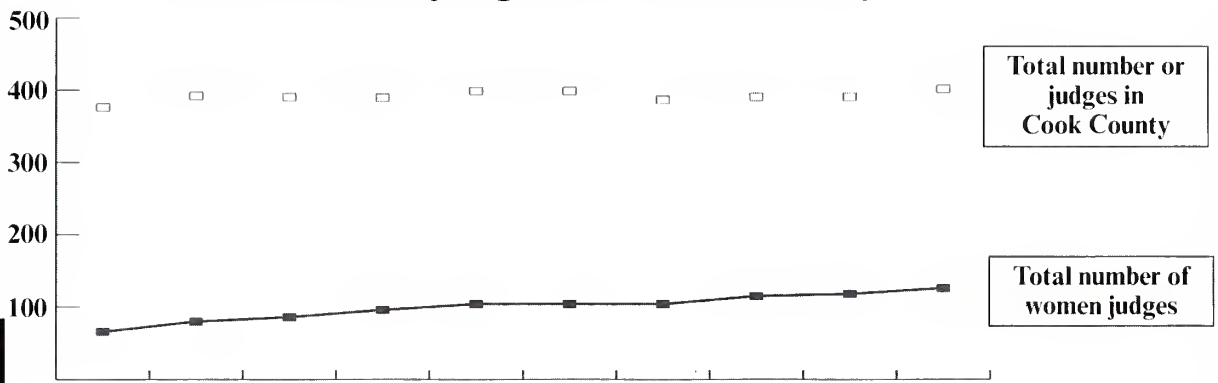
Nevertheless, it could help them indirectly. Women have made gains in the 21 circuits outside Cook County, but the percentage falls short of Cook's dramatic gains. Downstate, where most circuits cover multiple counties, women are still a distinct minority on the bench. In 1991, only 8.4 percent of the 430 downstate circuit judges were women. While almost doubling their numbers to 67, women still hold only 14.9 percent of the 449 circuit judgeships outside of Cook.

Still, women have made gains overall. They have, over the past decade or so, broken through all judicial glass ceilings. Mary Ann McMorro, a Democrat who came up through the ranks in Cook County, became the first woman to sit on the Illinois Supreme Court and, last September, the first female chief justice. She was joined on the bench by Rita Garman, a Danville Republican who also came up through the judicial ranks in her east central region of the state.

McMorro says women are winning judicial races because Illinoisans have come to the "realization that there's no inherent reason why women can't be judges."

But Dawn Clark Netsch, a law professor emerita at Northwestern University and a former state comptroller, says voters may think women are more ethical.

## More women judges in Cook County



And she adds that women voters may choose women judges as an exercise in female political power.

Yet more subtle factors may be at work. Though motivation is hard to pinpoint, Gino DiVito, a former appellate and circuit court judge, notes that Cook County voters tend to pick women candidates with Irish-American names over male candidates with other ethnic names.

Running for judge is hard work, nevertheless. And a win is not certain. Yet Nowicki says more women are taking that risk because there simply are more women in the legal profession. "It's one of your choices in life [to be a judge]," she says, rather than a barrier to break. And the pay is competitive: Associate judges earn \$127,247 per year, while circuit judges earn \$136,546 per year.

"There are more women lawyers willing to take the plunge," says Netsch. This coincides with women's choices to move into many professions over the past two decades.

The social culture has changed too. Attitudes about women's courtroom abilities were not always so enlightened, as Myra Bradwell discovered in 1869. Attempting to become Illinois' first woman lawyer, Bradwell was refused admission to the Illinois Bar because of her gender. She took her case to the Illinois Supreme Court, but it upheld the refusal because, "God designed the sexes to occupy different spheres of action, and it belonged to men to make, apply and execute the laws."

The court feared that if Bradwell

could practice law, women would then want access to all civil offices, such as governor — an idea the justices found disturbing. Bradwell appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, but was again denied admission to the bar on the basis of gender.

Two years later, in 1871, the Illinois attorney general told another woman, Amelia Hobbs, she could not serve as justice of the peace because the law did not permit him to certify the election of a woman.

A little more than a century later, when McMorow first became a judge in the Cook County Circuit Court, she said most women were relegated to traffic court. Now women preside over three of the circuit court's nine divisions. They include Judge Patricia Martin Bishop, who presides over the child protection division.

Martin Bishop says the nominating committee for Cook County associate judges, who are picked by elected circuit court judges, works diligently to ensure a diverse bench. Julie Bauer, chair of the Alliance for Women committee of the Chicago Bar Association sees such diversity as beneficial. "Increasing diversity gives the court increasing credibility," she says.

Having more women on the bench can make a difference in areas of family law, domestic relations or cases involving children, Netsch says. But women judges adamantly oppose any idea that they show favoritism to women in the courtroom or are more sympathetic to cases involving children.

Researchers, nevertheless, say women

judges may rule differently in certain areas of the law. According to Robert Van Sickle and Linda Maule, political science faculty and researchers at Indiana State University in Terre Haute, Ind., women judges tend to impose harsher sentences in criminal cases than their male counterparts.

Van Sickle published a study three years ago in the *Justice System Journal* on "masculine and feminine voice and style traits" of judges. It examined the judicial decision-making and judicial style of 28 trial court judges — men and women — from Indiana, New York, Wyoming, California and Washington, D.C.

Though researchers expected that men judges would be more likely to adhere strictly to rules and procedures, the study found that women judges ran their courtrooms in more authoritarian ways. At the same time, women judges were more likely to side with prosecutors. "Women employed a more masculine style [in the courtroom] than men did," Van Sickle says.

Maule says the assumption formulated by feminist theorists that women judges would be more nurturing or compassionate has not proven to be the case in her research.

"They are working hard not to perform as women," she says. "They may reach the same conclusions, but use a different decision-making process or different values. Because of past experience, certain things resonate more with them than men."

McMorow agrees. "We bring to the bench what we are." □



# FLORENCE THE FARM HAND

ON THE FARM FRONT

*The Women's Land Army in World War II*

Stephanie A. Carpenter, Northern Illinois University Press, 2003

Review by Bill Knight

A forgotten federal program that sent female workers to America's farms during World War II helped redefine women's roles.

Illinois wasn't eager to take part in the "Women's Land Army," though. This state — most of the Midwest and South, actually — wasn't anti-women, exactly.

Illinoisans' objections were less about female workers than about sending nonfarm and middle-class women into the fields. Those who opposed the move didn't necessarily doubt women's value, but rural men were just plain suspicious of urban women.

"Illinois farmers did not expect [women] to be useful or beneficial to general field operations," writes Stephanie A. Carpenter in *On The Farm Front: The Women's Land Army in World War II*, due to be published this month by Northern Illinois University Press.

Still, the program had plenty of supporters. "Soft white hands that used to pound the typewriter, wrap packages, wash dishes and make change are earning patriotic calluses pulling weeds, swinging hoes, steering tractors," remarked one upbeat writer Carpenter quotes.

The Women's Land Army, WLA for short, eventually reached all regions of the United States, mostly because no area escaped a shortage of labor, which became extreme after the war escalated in 1942. But it took a while.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture dragged its feet in answering the crisis and implementing the WLA — versions of which had worked in England, Wales and Australia for years, and in Great Britain during World War I. The U.S.

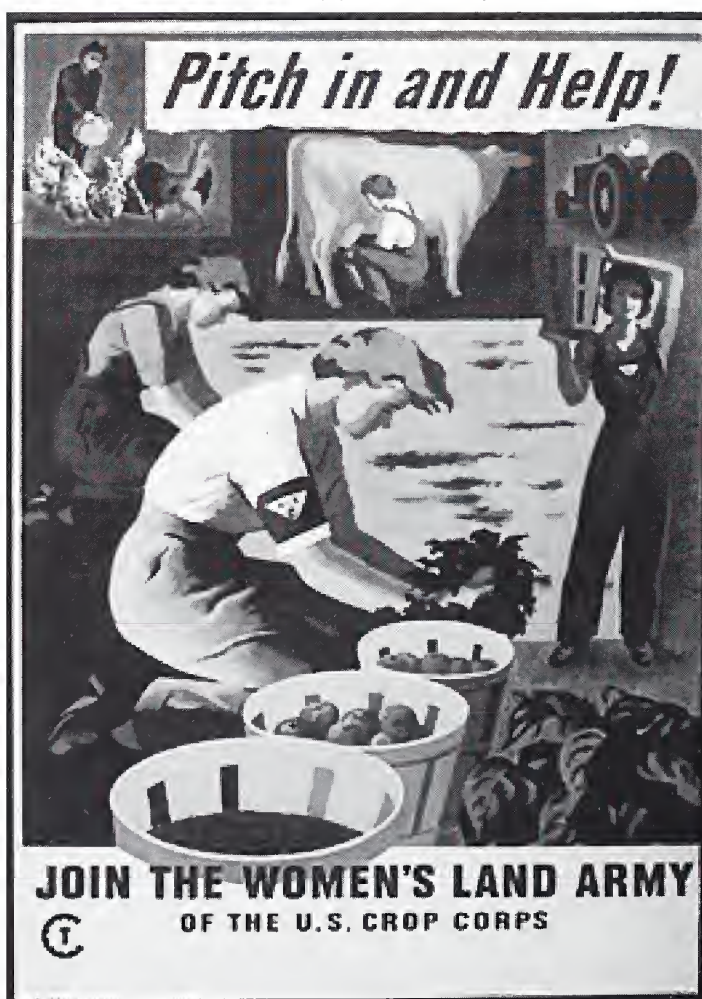
Labor Department and the federal Women's Bureau early on recognized the need and pushed for such a response. However, it took considerable press attention and "calls to arms" by such activists as newswoman and radio personality Dorothy Thompson to overcome a reluctance to tap into this new, willing work force.

Some elements of the federal government, after all, were proposing that women try new work and nontraditional roles, and if Rosie the Riveter became one model, Florence the Farm Hand became another.

"We were very reluctant to take a woman to assist us on the farm," a farm woman is quoted as saying, "but it turned out far better than we ever dreamed."

The program became part of the U.S. Crop Corps and the Victory Farm Volunteers in 1943. The federal government stepped up promotion and eventually recruited 3 million women 18 years old

*Courtesy of National Archives Special Media Division 44-PA-1511*



and up. In its first year, some 600,000 signed up and 250,000 were placed by the WLA. The program was administered by state and county extension service agents.

There was resistance in Illinois and much of the Midwest, where then, as now, agriculture was conducted on a large scale, with machinery and technology needed to raise mostly corn, wheat and livestock. Despite this, in 1943 almost 8,000 women came to Illinois farms to help the women and men who were left behind tend their fields and cattle.

"But neither the expertise nor skill demonstrated by Illinois women in agricultural chores convinced farmers to accept the women as permanent agricultural labor for general farms," writes Carpenter, an assistant professor of history at Murray State University in Kentucky.

"Farmers expressed the same concerns that other regions had expressed — the difficulties with training inexperienced women and dealing with the social and personal attitudes encountered among nonfarm women on farms."

The Farm Bureau, the Grange and other farm groups were hesitant about the WLA, preferring to address the labor shortage through a complex scheme of adjusting price supports and price ceilings on commodities to let some farmers offer higher pay.

Earl Smith, president of the Illinois Agricultural Association and vice president of the American Farm Bureau, refused to endorse the use of women, Carpenter writes.

Reform was pushed at the local level, and for practical reasons. Areas unwilling to accept WLA workers suffered serious agricultural and financial setbacks, and areas that participated had positive experiences.

"Warnings by moralists of the dangers of the employment of nonfarm women, including corruption of the local population, did not appear to hinder society from supporting and advocating the use of women as farm labor," Carpenter writes.

In 1944, Illinois producers sought seasonal help for short-term assistance, at planting time or during harvest, then more men shipped overseas, leaving

more openings and opportunities that only women could fill. Elsewhere, Illinois' hybrid seed producers called on the WLA for help.

As a result, anti-WLA feelings faded, and the resilience of the program and its volunteers became its strength. Several hundred thousand women workers shared the toil in the Midwest and South by war's end.

Interestingly, Carpenter shows that farm women welcomed help from city women, and supported them. "If we can get city women and girls who can live two weeks without bathrooms and nail polish, who can pump and carry water and use it carefully, who can work on a hot range all day, who can eat at a table with sweaty men in dirty overalls, who can take directions from a housewife as graciously as they can from a man in the office, who can work until 10 p.m. if the job isn't finished, and who can feel as patriotic doing all of this as a soldier earning \$1.30 a day, we can use them in our homes," said an Iowa woman.

Women unaccustomed to manual labor or rural settings detasseled corn, cultivated vegetables and picked fruit; they worked in dairies and canneries and poultry operations. Collectively, they overcame fear that they would only get in the way and accounted for the majority of wartime labor, Carpenter reports.

Within a few years, women were willing to work, and farms were willing to have them. So despite misgivings and prejudice against city women and the WLA, the federal program and its workers came to be accepted. "Farmers altered their attitude concerning nonfarm women laborers as the war progressed," Carpenter notes. "Midwestern farmers found that they did not have a choice in their search for acceptable farm labor."

Although in the South mostly poor whites and blacks were acceptable, the Midwest accepted many segments of the population for farm labor: Mexicans and Haitians, Native Americans and Japanese Americans, prisoners of war and conscientious objectors.

But apart from modest racial advances and the redefinition of male and female roles, a breakdown in the urban and rural stereotypes may have been the

longest-lasting result, the author shows.

The catalyst had been an economic reality — a shortage of labor, on farms as well as in factories. The result was more working women, regardless of where they lived, more women earning wages and moving from occasional help to full-time employment.

Such findings underscore the importance of the WLA. Not only did women work outside the home, they worked virtually everywhere men worked, and they found a measure of fulfillment there.

Sure, Carpenter shows that many women were forced out of their wartime jobs after the war to give way to returning vets, but that trend didn't last. In fact, after the war, many WLA volunteers stayed on as private hired hands or went with the Emergency Farm Labor Program, which continued through 1947.

If the WLA's stop-and-go emergence, experience and consequence seem a bit confusing, that may reveal a slight weakness in the book. Carpenter successfully avoids the arid sterility of more-academic treatments of history by exploiting an almost unknown phenomenon, expanding it to a time and place and exploring the effects. However, the book's structure is somewhat clumsy. Part of it centers on WLA's growth: preparation, operation and aftermath. But part of it centers on four geographic spinoffs — a nonlinear approach that makes it difficult to track different states or years.

Nevertheless, *On The Farm Front* tells a fine yarn and offers a compelling study of a problem and a response that led to positive, though unintended, consequences.

The results? Starting in the mid-'40s, women worked on farms and in factories, in businesses as well as in classrooms, in professions as well as in hospitals. And women began to feel comfortable in these roles.

"I'm still a hired girl," wrote Illinois WLA volunteer Edella Melville in *Farm Journal* magazine. "But I don't mind it in the least, for the houses where I work seem just like home." □

*Bill Knight, a Peoria journalist, teaches at Western Illinois University in Macomb.*



## LON MONK

### The governor's chief

Managing daily operations for Gov. Rod Blagojevich could be torture for somebody new to Illinois and, for that matter, new to government work. Especially in a state that's notorious for hardball politics.

But Lon Monk takes it in stride. "I've got nothing to really compare it to, so as far as I'm concerned this is normal."

As chief of staff, Monk is required to oversee the governor's personal staff and coordinate the work of cabinet directors and agencies under the governor's command.

The job is akin to chief executive officer of a corporation, says Sen. Kirk Dillard, a Hinsdale Republican who served as chief of staff under former Gov. Jim Edgar. He suggests Monk will be successful as long as he surrounds himself with people who possess institutional knowledge of state government.

A longtime friend of Blagojevich's, Monk grew up in Palos Verdes Estates, a California beach town south of Los Angeles. He met and roomed with Blagojevich at Pepperdine Law School in Malibu, Calif., in the early 1980s.

After law school, Monk launched a successful career as a

sports agent. He represented Czech tennis great Ivan Lendl and a host of Olympic athletes.

He stayed close with Blagojevich, though, serving as a groomsman at Blagojevich's wedding, then as Blagojevich's legal counsel in Washington, D.C., in early 2001 when Blagojevich was in Congress. Blagojevich then recruited Monk to manage his 2002 gubernatorial campaign — a move that stunned many campaign regulars who expected Blagojevich to hire an experienced operative.

Yet Monk focused on managing the process and left strategic decisions to others. "It wasn't me sitting there saying, 'You should be running this commercial on this particular day,' or 'You should be saying this about that,'" he says. "It was more making sure that people who were experts in their area were given the resources and put in the right positions to do their jobs."

The role of chief of staff is a natural progression from campaign manager. "He has to take the governor's positions," Dillard says, "and make sure that all these people [agency directors and staff] are singing off the same hymnal."

Aaron Chambers

## Key advisers & cabinet members

The governor created a Council of Economic Advisors, which is expected to focus on improving the state's climate for economic development and job creation. The group will be co-chaired by **Jim Annable**, an adviser to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, and **Paula Wolff**, executive director of Metropolis 2020.

Gov. Blagojevich tapped **Jack Lavin**, a chief finance officer for a Chicago restaurant firm and a former deputy state treasurer, to head a revamped economic development agency. The governor renamed the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and recast its mission to emphasize job creation.

Blagojevich says he wants the new director to review all Illinois First projects and legislative initiatives to decide which are essential and which are merely political.

...

**Mary Lee Leahy**, the Springfield labor attorney, was named to revise Illinois' hiring rules as special investigator for employment and personnel.

In other appointments, the governor named the first Latino to head the state's prison system. Blagojevich selected **Ernesto Velasco**, who served as director of the Cook County jail, as the director of the state's Department of Corrections.

**Carol Adams**, executive director of the Center for Inner City Studies at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, has been named to head the Department of Human Services.

...

**Brian Hamer**, the first deputy director of the city of Chicago's Department of Revenue, will direct the state's Department of Revenue.

**Timothy Martin**, the chief operating officer of Chicago Public Schools, has been named director of the Illinois Department of Transportation.

**Michael Fenger**, the Rockford-area representative of the 1,200-member International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 364, was named director of the Illinois Department of Labor.

**Jack Hartman**, the Chicago Transit Authority vice president, will head the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority.

**Barry Maram**, a Chicago attorney and former agency leader in former Gov. James Thompson's administration, was appointed to head the Department of Public Aid.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich has appointed three new members to the University of Illinois Board of Trustees: **Robert Sperling**, a Glencoe resident and attorney at Winston & Strawn; **Niranjan Shah**, an Oak Brook resident and chairman and CEO of the Globetrotters Engineering firm; and **Devon Bruce**, an attorney at Chicago's Powers, Rogers & Smith. If the Senate approves, they will serve until 2009.

**Lawrence Eppley**, an attorney at Bell Book and Lloyd in Chicago, has been elected to head the board. He was appointed to a six-year term in 2001.

For the latest transitions see *Illinois Issues* ONLINE at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

## JOHN FILAN The budgeteer

John Filan left the accounting firm he helped found 25 years ago to become budget director for Gov. Rod Blagojevich during the state's multibillion dollar deficit. Call it his sense of duty.

"It's a new governor with the Democratic Party and I'm a Democrat," Filan says. "It's the first Democrat in more than 25 years, and I think it's an opportunity to try and put a government on the right track."

Filan also serves as the governor's chief fiscal adviser. This is quite a burden in light of the deficit that Blagojevich estimates at nearly \$5 billion through the next fiscal year. But those who know Filan say he's up to the task. Lt. Gov. Patrick Quinn, who worked beside Filan on former Gov. Dan Walker's 1972 campaign, calls Filan's knowledge of finance and state government "encyclopedic."

Filan was managing partner at Chicago-based FPT&W Ltd., one of the city's largest accounting and consulting firms, until his January appointment. He headed the financial consulting side of the firm, which involved cash-flow forecasting relative to operating and capital budgets. One of his larger projects involved restructuring the Chicago Park District's budgetary process. The firm has more than 100 local governments as clients.

Laurence Msall, president of the Civic Federation, a tax policy watchdog group based in Chicago, calls Filan "well suited to look for creative ways to address the revenue shortfall." Filan served on the federation's board, and the two worked together through the federation at the Illinois Development Finance Authority.

Filan grew up on Chicago's South Side, graduated from St. Joseph's College in Indiana, and earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of Chicago. He was an assistant director in the agency that preceded Central Management Services during Walker's administration. He also served on Walker's staff. Filan left state government in 1977, going on to found FPT&W.

On Filan's return to state government, and the sacrifice, Msall says, "I think it is quite a tribute to his sense of public service that he would give up a very successful partnership in order to take on a job that will be nothing but hard work."

*Aaron Chambers*

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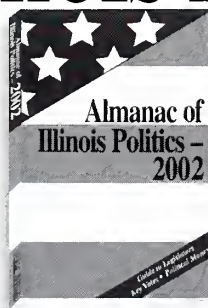
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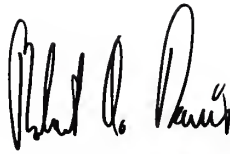
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## Mayor Richard Daley has committed a political sin that even his loving dad probably wouldn't absolve

by Robert Davis

**A**ny journalist, especially one who has worked at the *Chicago Tribune*, knows never to report the outcome of an election before it's over. But let's just say it's a pretty safe bet that Richard M. Daley is going to be serving as mayor of Chicago for another four years.

He's had a history of easy re-election bids, but Daley this time faces what could only be described charitably as token opposition with a field of three opponents led by the Rev. Paul Jakes, a civil rights activist whose complaints against police are his primary issue. The other two, also African American, are blips on the political screen. So, barring any "Dewey Defeats Truman" surprises, Richard Daley will be continuing his already 14-year-old dynasty and marching steadily toward his late father's 21-year record in the Chicago mayor's office.

It's also a good bet that Daley can go for the record books in 2007, if he chooses to run again. And there doesn't seem to be at this moment any reason why he wouldn't. The one candidate whose name keeps coming up in recent years is U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., who certainly has the name recognition and has been steadily building his own political machine by backing such successful candidates as the Rev. James Meeks, recently elected to the Illinois Senate.

But here is what Jackson had to say to *Tribune* editorial board members in

late December when asked about a possible mayoral bid. "I'm not interested in the job of mayor of Chicago. I'm not interested in it today. I'm not interested in it tomorrow. I'm not ever going to be interested in being the mayor of the city of Chicago." Not much wriggle room in there. But just in case there was some, he then said, "This mayor [Daley] is a very popular mayor. He's done an extraordinary job."

The Rev. Jakes, who had hoped for a Harold Washington-like black voter uprising, disagreed.

A few weeks later, Ald. Helen Shiller, probably the last of the 50 aldermen to have the nerve to call herself an independent, held a news conference to endorse Daley, claiming that her decades of dissent finally forced him into being a pretty good mayor after all. "We've made them work hard, and I appreciate that they've risen to the challenge," said Shiller of Daley and his minions. Shiller, by the way, used to vote automatically against all mayoral city budgets, but in the last few years she has joined the other aldermen in unanimous favorable votes.

This is not to say that Daley has achieved nirvana-like perfection. It seems there is really nobody who likes the architectural monstrosity that has been rising inside Soldier Field, which actually was never much of a landmark in the first place. And the lakefront Millennium Park now appears to be named, not for the year 2000, but for

the length of time it will take to complete. Most recently, a favoritism-tinged contract to allow a clout-heavy firm to install advertising bus shelters all over town has been getting a lot of criticism, but they are being installed nonetheless.

But, for the most part, Daley seems to have his government apparatus well in hand. While Gov. Rod Blagojevich has inherited a governmental "fixer-upper," with no money to do necessary repairs, Daley says Chicago is short of cash, but there's no feel of panic in the air yet.

While Blagojevich and his vanquished Republican opponent, Jim Ryan, managed to spend a total of about \$35 million in their election bids, Daley doesn't have a discernible campaign.

Election Day is on February 25 — between the time this goes to press and the time it gets into readers' hands — but there's little doubt about the outcome, and little chance for the runoff that would be required should he not win 50 percent of the turnout.

So if Richard Daley has not only become but threatens to eclipse his legendary father, he also has committed a political sin that even his loving dad probably wouldn't absolve. He has made Chicago elections boring. □

*Robert Davis, who covered Chicago politics for the Chicago Tribune for more than 30 years, teaches journalism at Columbia College Chicago and Trinity Christian College.*



*Mike Morsch*



## The public should care about a hissing match between the governor and the media

by Mike Morsch

**T**he Statehouse press corps is a little cranky these days, and the problem can't be traced to the coffee.

Seems what's got everyone's knickers in a bunch is the lack of a clue exhibited by the new administration's communications staff. Specifically, administration representatives aren't returning phone calls to the media in a timely fashion. Actually, they're barely returning phone calls at all.

And it's not just the Springfield-based media. Chicago reporters also are experiencing difficulty in getting one-on-one time with Gov. Blagojevich and those who speak for him.

It didn't help that the governor blamed the problem on the media itself. During a Springfield press conference, Blagojevich said, "With regard to those phone calls, I want to get to the bottom of that. In defense of our communications team, some of you guys have to work a little past 6 o'clock, because they claim they call you after six."

That's like taking a stick and poking a sleeping bear, poking him right in the eye. Several times.

That got the attention of many reporters, including Doug Finke of the Springfield *State Journal-Register*. In his regular Sunday column called "Statehouse Insider," Finke explained what he called, "the facts of life" to the governor. "The news media operates under deadlines. Those deadlines don't get extended because your press staff finds it incon-

venient to return calls on a timely basis. And do you seriously think one of your flacks expected to reach a reporter when he returned one phone call after midnight a couple of weeks ago?"

The rumblings aren't limited to the print media. Michael Wilson, state capital bureau chief and talk show host for WMAY Radio in Springfield, said he was promised an interview with the new governor, but never received a call back from administration officials. So, while on the air, he called Billy Weinberg, an administration spokesman, and left a message about not getting a callback.

"We know what the situation is, that they're having a communications problem," Wilson said of the administration. "But the general consensus among the press corps is that it's just ineptitude [on the part of the administration]. We have so many questions that are going unanswered. We're not getting the complete and balanced story out to the listeners in central Illinois."

The public might not be concerned about a hissing match between the media and the administration. But it should, because larger issues could arise from this communications problem. First, the media is the governor's conduit to the public. Does anyone think for one moment that a member of the general public could get information directly by calling the administration? On a daily basis? If the early pattern were any indication, that person

wouldn't get a callback. Secondly, as pointed out by Wilson, the public isn't getting both sides of the story when the administration doesn't engage in the discussion.

Another perspective, as offered in the January edition of *Illinois Issues* in a column by editor Peggy Boyer Long, is that it's important to cultivate a relationship with the messengers whose job it is to inform Illinois citizens about their government. She cited former Gov. Dan Walker's inability to do this as contributing to his one-term fate.

Not to be overlooked is this: Are the governor's difficulties with the media an indication of greater strains within the administration? Blagojevich is certainly leaving room for that debate. Statehouse media types say the communications snafus aren't a new problem. Some reporters have experienced this type of treatment from the Blagojevich camp for nearly a year now.

Cheryle Jackson, Blagojevich's communications director, is quoted as saying the situation will improve. And longtime state government agency spokesman Tom Schafer has been hired as acting press secretary in the governor's Springfield office. Let's hope he comes bearing gifts — namely a lot of answers and a big pot of decaf for the media crew. □

*Mike Morsch can be reached by telephone at 217-206-6521 or through e-mail at [morsch.michael@nis.edu](mailto:morsch.michael@nis.edu).*

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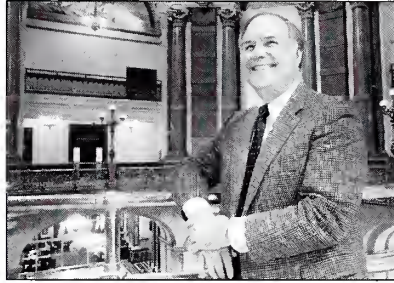
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## Illinois Issues

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Charles N. Wheeler III



## Revelations from the political corruption trial could cause change

by Charles N. Wheeler III

**H**arry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix it's not, but the late January release of *The Master List* created as great a stir in Illinois political circles as news that J.K. Rowling's fifth book about the boy wizard is coming in June.

*The Master List*, of course, is the 555-page scorecard Scott Fawell kept of the favors he dispensed as George Ryan's chief of staff during the former governor's two terms as secretary of state. So keen was interest in the document — made public at Fawell's trial on charges of political corruption — that federal prosecutors had to enlist printing companies in Chicago and Springfield to meet the demand, at \$13.50 a copy.

The list includes some 10,000 names, among them a Who's Who of politicians and public officials, plus assorted business and labor leaders, sports figures — even some reporters — whom Fawell dutifully recorded as beneficiaries of the secretary of state's largesse, ranging from jobs and contracts to low digit license plates.

The list, prosecutors said, reflected Fawell's view of the secretary of state's office as a campaign tool for Ryan's political ambitions and of state workers and resources as means to that end. Some of those on the list readily admitted going to bat for a friend, relative or political supporter, while others said they didn't ask for anything and don't know why their

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***The Master List merely confirmed what many Illinoisans assumed has been the case all along — clout counts in the back-scratching, log-rolling milieu in which government and politics are intertwined in Illinois.***

names appeared.

Apparently, Fawell kept tabs on virtually every contact made with the secretary of state's office as a potential quo for which a quid — a legislative vote, a campaign contribution, a favorably nuanced story — might be gained later. After all, that's how the game's been played in Illinois forever, right? Indeed, disclosure of *The Master List* merely confirmed what many Illinoisans assumed has been the case all along — clout counts in the back-scratching, log-rolling milieu in which government and politics are intertwined in Illinois.

But should citizens be content to continue with business as usual? As the Fawell trial and the licenses-for-bribes probe preceding it illustrate, the status quo carries a heavy price tag.

Innocent lives were lost, for example, when unqualified applicants got commercial driver's licenses in return for bribes, some finding their way into Ryan's campaign coffers. Taxpayers were cheated by secretary of state workers laboring on state time to elect Ryan, using state equipment for campaign operations.

Harder to measure but no less real is the corrosive effect political corruption has on the public, spawning cynicism and undermining civic engagement — intangible harm more pernicious to society than mere dollars-and-cents losses.

The latest revelations, though, may be the catalyst required to engender change. Gov. Rod Blagojevich made ethics reform a key campaign pledge, and as the Fawell trial unfolded, the governor issued a series of executive orders designed to change what he called "a culture of corruption" permeating state government. The measures would:

- Create an independent inspector general to investigate any allegations of corruption in executive branch agencies. An ethics hotline also would be set up for citizens to report suspicious behavior.
- Provide greater protection from retaliation for state workers who report wrongdoing.
- Require ethics training for all state employees in an effort to "change the culture and establish a new mindset,"

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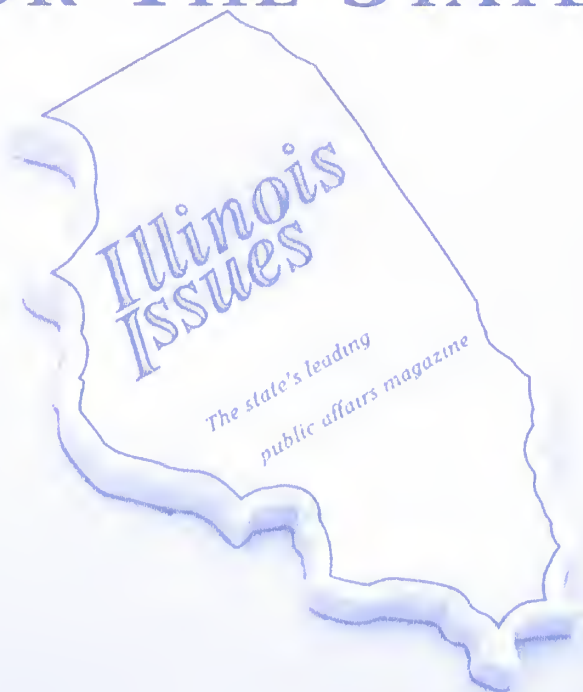
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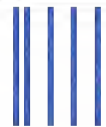
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the governor said.

A hotline, whistle-blower protection and ethics training are among the recommendations of the Illinois Ethics Reform Project, a coalition of "good government" groups pushing for tougher standards in public life.

"Anything we can do to help our state employees be sensitive to these issues is a good thing," says Cindi Canary, director of the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform, a coalition member.

Other coalition proposals would:

- Prohibit government employees and appointees from seeking campaign contributions from those they supervise, regulate or license.

- Require state employees moonlighting as campaign workers to keep time sheets and travel logs — available for public inspection — that show how their working hours are divided, and to reimburse the state for the pro-rated cost of vacation, health insurance, pension credits and other fringe benefits for time spent on campaign duty.

***But should citizens be content to continue with business as usual? As the Scott Fawell trial and the licenses-for-bribes probe preceding it illustrate, the status quo carries a heavy price tag.***

- Ban state employees from going to work for a private firm with whom the employee negotiated contracts, worked with procurement, or supervised, regulated, investigated or licensed.

- Mandate more frequent and informative campaign finance disclosure reports and more detailed statements of economic interest.

Most of the coalition's recommendations have bipartisan support in both chambers, reflecting what Canary hopes is a new appreciation among lawmakers for the degree to which average citizens are concerned about ethics in government.

"I am optimistic," she says. "I think there's an awareness of how far things have deteriorated. ... I think most legislators felt the fallout in their campaigns — they were asked questions they were not used to."

But more than legislation will be required to change Illinois' old way of doing business, Canary believes. "What we need is leadership that says this kind of behavior won't be tolerated."

Blagojevich seems determined to meet that challenge — and it's one campaign promise that carries no price tag. □

*Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting Program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.*

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CENTER FOR GOVERNMENTAL STUDIES

of the University of Illinois at Springfield

invite you to a reception honoring

*Illinois Issues* co-founder



Samuel K. Gove

Wednesday, April 2, 2003

5:00-7:00 p.m.

program at 6:00 p.m.

Public Affairs Center Restaurant

UIS Campus

One University Plaza, Springfield, IL

\$20/person

For reservations please call (217) 206-6084 or e-mail [illinoisissues@uis.edu](mailto:illinoisissues@uis.edu) by March 19th

